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INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000350

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2018
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: BRV BUSTS MAJOR COLOMBIAN NARCO-TRAFFICKER

REF: CARACAS 000320

Classified By: Daniel Lawton, Acting Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Venezuelan law enforcement personnel arrested Colombian drug trafficker, para-military and gunrunner Hermagoras "Gordo" Gonzalez Polanco on March 8. Minister of Interior and Justice Ramon Rodriguez Chacin confirmed the arrest of Gonzalez during a March 10 press conference. Chacin added that he favored trying the Colombian-born Gonzalez in Venezuela and promised to get to the bottom of why he had been carrying Venezuelan identity and police documents. Gonzalez could be in a position to use his knowledge about corrupt Venezuelan officials to bargain for leniency. END SUMMARY.

TAKE DOWN

12. (SBU) According to local news reports, Hermagoras "Gordo" Gonzalez Polanco, alleged head of the Guajira drug cartel, was arrested March 8 along with 13 employees by agents of the Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services (DISIP) at his ranch south of Lake Maracaibo in the Venezuelan border-state of Zulia. Gonzalez is also reportedly linked to the Colombian right wing para-military group United Colombian Self-Defense (AUC). Gonzalez was carrying credentials of a DISIP commissioner, a Guardia Nacional Intelligence Branch chief commissioner and a weapons carry permit from the Ministry of Defense at the time of his arrest.

RIGHT TO A SPEEDY TRIAL

13. (SBU) Although Gonzalez could face multiple charges of money laundering, drug trafficking, arms smuggling and document fraud, he was only charged with money laundering at his March 10 arraignment. His defense attorney, fearing extradition, has asserted that Gonzalez is a native-born Venezuelan engaged in ranching and maintains that the prosecution lacks sufficient evidence to file additional charges at his arraignment.

TALKING TOUGH

14. (SBU) Minister of Justice and Interior Ramon Rodriguez Chacin came out strongly against Gonzalez during his March 10 press conference saying that Venezuela was "making a frontal assault " against drug trafficking. Chacin swore that nothing would be "covered up," including the alleged links between Gonzalez and the pro-Chavez mayor of Maracaibo, Giancarlo Di Martino. Chacin also pledged that Venezuela would strengthen intelligence units and, if needed, "create specialized units for the war on drugs."

DUDDY